

SECRET

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Executive Registry
75-3324

15 JUL 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
VIA : Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : The Fall of South Vietnam

Forwarded herewith are replies to your queries regarding specific events which led to the fall of South Vietnam in April 1975. The classified version is for your information and the unclassified version is for your possible passage

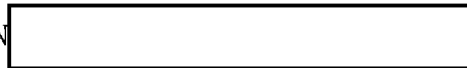


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Acting Chief, East Asia Division

cc: DCI w/a

ORIG: VNO/SVN



(15 July 1975)

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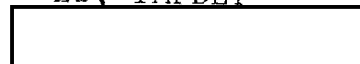
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(EXECUTIVE REGISTRY FILE V-1)

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1. What happened at Ban Me Thuot? Did FULRO join NVN and open way for them?

The government's inability to confirm the locations of major North Vietnamese units in the central highlands and its piecemeal commitment of reinforcements were the principal factors contributing to the loss of Ban Me Thuot. In early March, most South Vietnamese commanders felt the North Vietnamese would focus their attacks on Kontum and Pleiku cities, consequently, the government's combat strength was concentrated in these two areas. Following the Communist interdiction of all major roadways leading into the highlands, attacks were conducted in mid-March against Ban Me Thuot by main force North Vietnamese units believed to have consisted of units from the 320th, 10th and 316th divisions together with independent and local force units in the area. Sensitive sources confirm that FULRO dissidents participated in the attacks probably to help the Communists identify government positions and terrain features.

2. Was Ban Me Thuot local operation, or only exploiting opportunity?

Communists chose Ban Me Thuot as a test and probably concentrated their attacks against the city once they were convinced the South Vietnamese were keeping its combat

strength in the Kontum/Pleiku area. If, however, the South Vietnamese had decided to shift the bulk of their strength to the Ban Me Thuot area, North Vietnamese very likely could have readjusted battle plans to focus attacks against either Kontum, Pleiku or both.

3. Militarily, what happened at Hue evacuation?

Three factors contributed to the loss of Hue above and beyond the two-divisional force the North Vietnamese had readied to attack the city: 1) the removal of the Airborne Brigade from the Hue area on 20 March; 2) the closure of Route 1 between Hue and Danang by the Communists on March 24; 3) confusing orders from Saigon to military region commander General Truong to first defend Hue, then withdraw to Danang, then defend Hue once the escape route along Route 1 was closed. After March 24, South Vietnamese units disintegrated--especially the government's purported crack 1st division--and Hue fell shortly thereafter to the Communists without a major fight.

4. Did Soviets play any staff role in planning the offensive?

There is nothing to confirm Soviet involvement in planning the offensive. The Soviet army's General Staff chief Kulikov visited North Vietnam in December 1974, at the invitation of North Vietnamese Defense Minister Giap and it is possible that Kulikov reviewed Hanoi's plans for stepped up military action in the south at that time.

5. When did NVN Reserve Divisions move south?

Movement of North Vietnamese strategic reserve divisions:

- 968th Division Moved from southern Laos to the highlands of MR-2 (Kontum and Pleiku area) during January 1975
- 316th Division Moved from central North Vietnam to highlands of MR-2 during February - March 1975. This division fought at Ban Me Thuot
- 312th Division From central North Vietnam to MR-3*
- 320B Division From central North Vietnam to MR-3*
- 338th Division From central North Vietnam to MR-3*
- 341st Division Moved from southern North Vietnam to MR-3 during February-March 1975
- 308th Division There were several indications this division was preparing to move to South Vietnam in March-April 1975, but it never actually moved

*Part of North Vietnamese 1st Corps which moved to MR-3 during April 1975

6. What is our estimate of aircraft and helicopters left to NVN?

The North Vietnamese are believed to have taken possession of some 1,100 South Vietnamese aircraft. Of this total, some 300 are fighter and attack aircraft, 50 are general cargo aircraft, and more than 450 are helicopters.

The condition of these aircraft ranges from not repairable to excellent. Photography shows at least 400 aircraft with no visible damage, suggesting that at least some require only fuel and/or minimum maintenance to become flyable. The total number of undamaged aircraft may be

considerably higher as numerous aircraft are unaccounted for and are assumed to be in covered storage facilities.

North Vietnam also captured large quantities of aircraft munitions and aircraft-support equipment. The amount of spare parts captured is not known, but some items had been in short supply since the reduction of US aid began. There have been few reports of the destruction of parts inventories upon departure of the South Vietnamese. The stocks of spare parts available to the North Vietnamese can be considerably augmented through selective cannibalization.

7. Is it correct that of 10 CBU bombs given to SVN seven were not armed?

The South Vietnamese were supplied with a few CBU-55 bombs, but the precise number is unavailable at this time. It is believed that fewer than a dozen were lost to the North Vietnamese. These weapons were also believed to be complete with fuses.

Other sophisticated weapons systems lost to the North Vietnamese include the BLU-82, 15,000 pound bomb, flechette rockets, and several tactical missile systems.

8. Total U.S. losses in VN?

The present market value of the US equipment captured is estimated at several billion dollars. The losses include:

- 1,550 tanks and armored vehicles
- 1,130 artillery pieces
- more than a million infantry weapons

- 44,500 trucks and tractors
- 400 naval combat vessels, 450 transport vessels,
and 200 auxiliary boats
- 1,100 military aircraft
- An estimated 130,000 tons of ammunition
- Large amounts of communications equipment
- Numerous types of radar equipment
- Large quantities of sophisticated military equipment including computers, flight simulators, cipher units, cameras, and missile systems.

9. Names of SVN generals who got out. Attached is a partial listing of general officers who evacuated Vietnam. We are attempting to obtain a more complete and accurate accounting. When obtained it will be forwarded to you.

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1. What happened at Ban Me Thuot? Did FULRO join NVN and open way for them?

The government's inability to confirm the locations of major North Vietnamese units in the central highlands and its piecemeal commitment of reinforcements appear to have been the principal factors contributing to the loss of Ban Me Thuot. In early March, most South Vietnamese commanders evidently felt the North Vietnamese would focus their attacks on Kontum and Pleiku cities; consequently, the government's combat strength was concentrated in these two areas. Following the Communist interdiction of all major roadways leading into the highlands, attacks were conducted in mid-March against Ban Me Thuot by main force North Vietnamese units believed to have consisted of three divisions together with independent and local force units in the area. Press reports stated that FULRO dissidents participated in the attacks probably to help the Communists identify government positions and terrain features, but these reports have not been confirmed.

2. Was Ban Me Thuot local operation, or only exploiting opportunity?

The Communists probably chose Ban Me Thuot as a test and concentrated their attacks against the city once they were convinced the South Vietnamese were keeping their combat strength in the Kontum/Pleiku area. If, however,

the South Vietnamese had decided to shift the bulk of their strength to the Ban Me Thuot area, North Vietnamese very likely could have readjusted battle plans to focus attacks against either Kontum, Pleiku or both.

3. Militarily, what happened at Hue evacuation?

Two primary factors contributing to the loss of Hue above and beyond the two-divisional force the North Vietnamese had readied to attack the city were the removal of the Airborne Brigade from the Hue area on 20 March and the closure of Route 1 between Hue and Danang by the Communists on March 24. There also appears to have been some indecision on the government's part concerning how strongly Hue was to be defended. After March 24, South Vietnamese units disintegrated--especially the government's purportedly crack 1st division--and Hue fell shortly thereafter to the Communists without a major fight.

4. Did Soviets play any staff role in planning the offensive?

There is nothing to confirm Soviet involvement in planning the offensive. The Soviet army's General Staff chief Kulikov visited North Vietnam in December 1974, at the invitation of North Vietnamese Defense Minister Giap, and it is possible that Kulikov reviewed Hanoi's plans for stepped up military action in the south at that time.

5. When did NVN Reserve Divisions move south?

The bulk of North Vietnam's strategic reserve divisions moved into South Vietnam during March and April.

--968th Division Reported fighting in Central Highlands in March - evidently moved in from southern Laos sometime before the fall of Ban Me Thuot.

--316th Division Was also reported fighting in the south during March - apparently relocated from NVN during late February or early March.

--312th Division From central North Vietnam to MR-3*

--320B Division From central North Vietnam to MR-3*

--338th Division From central North Vietnam to MR-3*

--341st Division Moved from southern North Vietnam to MR-3

*Part of North Vietnamese 1st Corps
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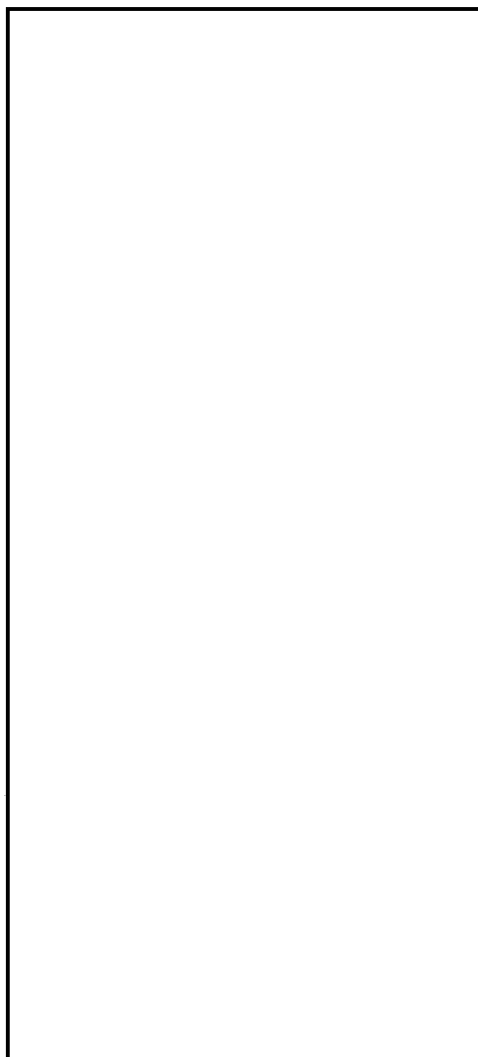
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- An estimated 130,000 tons of ammunition
- Large amounts of communications equipment
- Numerous types of radar equipment
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9. Names of SVN Generals who got out.

The following is a partial list of SVN General-grade officers who got out of Vietnam.



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